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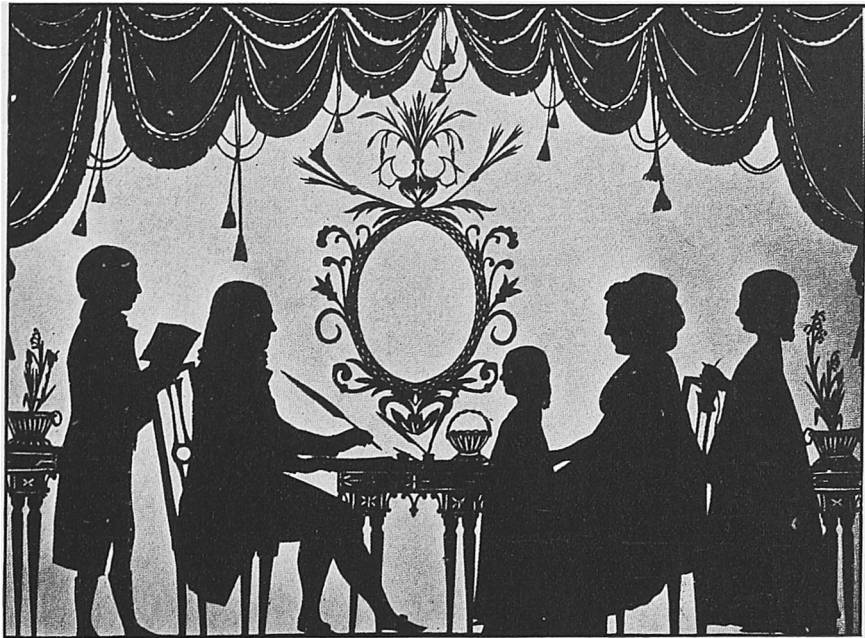
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THE BURNEY  
FAMILY TAKEN  
ABOUT 1790



CHARACTERISTIC  
EXAMPLE OF  
THE PERIOD

## THE DECORATIVE VALUE OF THE SILHOUETTE

BY VIRGINIA ROBIE

"SAT to-day for my portrait" runs a line in an old diary. "For the first time I was afraid of my shadow."

To a generation unfamiliar with the snapshot, the silhouette must have seemed painfully realistic. In comparison with the miniature and the oil portrait, it was direct and at times unflattering. Yet the art flourished, and "shadowgraphs," as they were originally called, had a great vogue. To-day they are scarce enough to make collecting interesting and decidedly worth while.

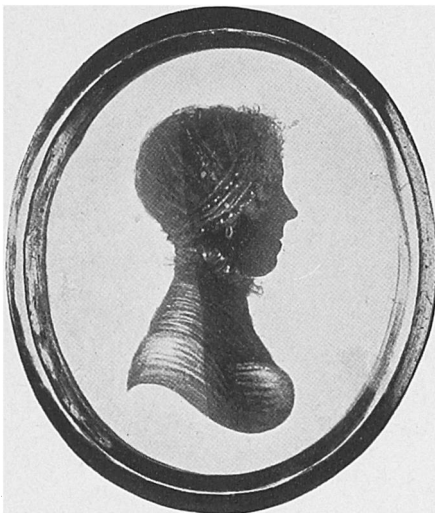
Old miniatures are costly, but silhouettes, unless the rarest examples be desired, may be purchased at comparatively moderate rates. And how well these charming things in black and white fit into the new-old room; preferably one's great, great grandfather in queue and lace ruffles over the old desk, and one's great aunt in the costume of 1830 hung just above it, or, better still, some quaint little kinswoman, aged five or six, in pantalets and pinafores. Lacking these, several picturesque unknowns picked up in unexpected places make an excellent beginning.

My own small collection divides my affections with my bowls and my band boxes and probably gives greater pleasure to friends. The human interest of the silhouette is at once apparent, while the spectacles of George III would be needed by some people in order to see the fascinations of old bowls and boxes.

My first silhouette was a full length portrait of Dr. Thomas Cope of Philadelphia by August Edouart and its purchase was a happy incident. I was hunting

old maps in a little bookshop on Beacon Hill, well known for its rare prints, autographed letters, etc. Once an engraving in color by Paul Revere hung in the window! One never could tell what might happen. I liked the Philadelphia gentleman in tall hat and long coat, although the date affixed to the signature, 1843, was rather late for keenest enthusiasm; moreover I preferred heads rather than full length silhouettes and a costume more picturesque than that of the middle of our own nineteenth century. But the figure was very well done, and the elaborate garden background in pencil quite out of the ordinary. The garden suggested Versailles and gave an imaginative touch in humorous contrast with the brisk and altogether American Dr. Cope. So the 1843 silhouette joined an old map of Boston harbor, a battered "Geography of the Heavens" and a bound volume of *Godey's Magazine* for 1865, the latter fairly alive with fashion plates in color.

And that was the beginning. To-day Dr. Cope has a place in my regard second only to that of Queen Victoria by Miers. The royal lady is shown riding in Hyde Park and the date is 1845. A youthful sovereign it is and a very charming one. The work of Miers affords an interesting contrast with that of Edouart. The Englishman used India ink touched up with gold; the Frenchman, scissors and a pencil. The details of the Queen's costume are in gold, as are the trappings of the horse, while conspicuous on the saddle are the initials "V. R." True to the period is the flowing mane, long tail, and arched neck; true, too, are the long habit and big plumed hat. This interesting

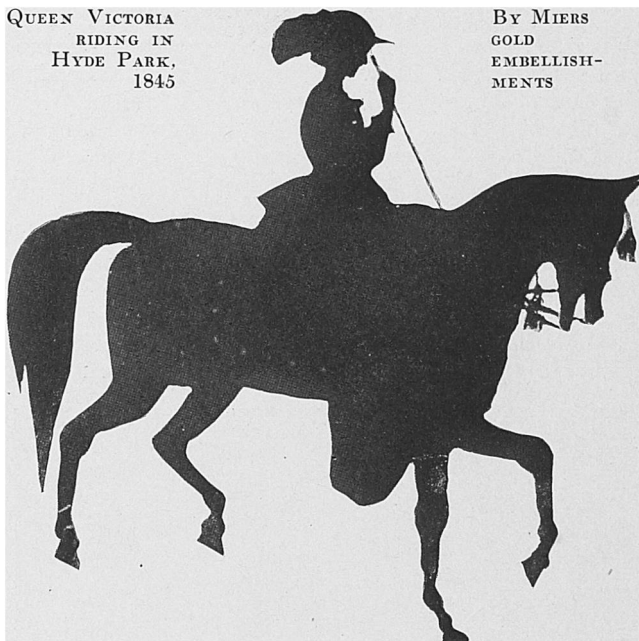


BLACK AND GOLD ATTRIBUTED TO MIERS



GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT

QUEEN VICTORIA  
RIDING IN  
HYDE PARK,  
1845



BY MIERS  
GOLD  
EMBELLISH-  
MENTS



KEMBLE PAULDING,  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

specimen was the gift of an English friend and gave a new impetus to enthusiasm. But for the youthful Victoria, my silhouette collecting might have halted with Dr. Cope. With her arrival one or two things seemed necessary; either to go on silhouetting with seriousness of purpose, or to build up a different collection around the royal rider, adding a Jubilee pitcher and a fine old luster bowl showing the Queen in her bridal veil with the Prince Consort at her side.

Realizing how things "flock" when once started, I knew that the "Victorian" scheme would hum merrily. The first old shop entered would probably contain a print of John Brown and the Queen, or something else so entirely pat that possession would be instantaneous. Visions of tureens of every known form came to mind, silver soup ladles, covered butter dishes. Eastlake furniture. No! "Victorian" was not a magic word. It might become so in another fifty years, but too soon, far too soon, to go in—mind, heart and soul—for mid-nineteenth century things!

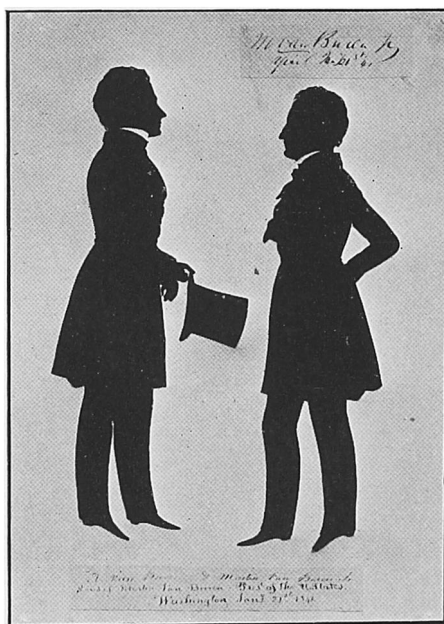
The unexpected find of an American silhouette of a charming child, unnamed, unsigned and undated, seemed to settle the matter. Then came the great event—three thousand and more silhouettes in one New York gallery, silhouettes covering the walls, filling portfolios, signed, dated, sometimes carrying the autographs of the sitters, all the work of one man, and that man—August Amanst Constance Fidele Edouart, none other than the maker of Dr. Thomas Cope.

Up to this time my knowledge of Edouart could be summed up in a few words; born at Dunkirk in 1788, settled in England in 1815, made many distinguished portraits, came to America in 1839; now the life-history of this remarkable artist was at hand, together with an astonishing number of his portraits.

How did it happen that so many examples could be found at this late day and gathered under one roof? The question might well be asked, although the answer is rather simple. The ten years August Edouart spent in America, 1839-1849, were busy ones. At the height of his fame, he was so rushed with orders that engagements had to be made weeks in advance. No photographer of our day is half so popular as was this silhouettist of French birth and English prestige. A list of his patrons forms a "Who's Who" of the "forties," a "Social Register" of wit, beauty and fashion. In New York, Boston and Washington he met with great success, while his studio at Saratoga Springs, the Newport of that day, proved a Mecca for the summer colony. Some of the most interesting examples of his work in America were made at this watering-place.

With a method seldom joined to the artistic temperament, Edouart cut every portrait in duplicate, keeping one copy for himself. When possible, he secured an autograph, adding the

year, the day of the month, the place, and any other interesting detail at command. Thanks to this rare combination of talent and system, the big New York exhibition was possible. The



TWO SONS OF MARTIN VAN BUREN

three thousand and six hundred specimens shown represented a complete record of his American tour.

Where, one is tempted to ask, are the mates of this wonderful three thousand six hundred? Strewn to the four winds or to the four corners of this big country. In family treasure boxes, attics, old book-shops! Who can say. Could they be assembled together, they would doubtless afford an interesting study in backgrounds. Edouart was famous for his interiors and when possible liked to pose people in their own houses. What a graphic picture we would receive of the household art of the forties—a rather hazy period in the minds of most of us. We can but regret that Edouart, careful workman that he seems to have been, did not add backgrounds to his own personal set, thus giving as perfect a record of household art as he did of costumes.

Back of the big New York exhibition is a story, the facts of which sound like romance. Full of honors and somewhat richer in this world's goods, Edouart returned to London on board the *Oneida*, a small Southern vessel loaded with cotton. Off the coast of Guernsey, in a furious gale, the boat foundered, and the twenty-six passengers narrowly escaped death—but the precious silhouettes were saved. Our friend, August, was taken to the house of a man named Lukis, where he remained until able to continue his journey. Out of gratitude for the kind treatment received he presented Fredericka Lukis, daughter of his host, with the entire American series. From a grandson of Fredericka, the collection was purchased by Mrs.

F. Nevill Jackson of London, still intact and carefully preserved, and from her it was secured by Mr. Arthur T. Vernay of New York, who made all lovers of silhouettes his debtor by placing the complete set on exhibition. It was Mr. Vernay's first intention to offer the collection *en bloc* to one of our big museums, but the private sale gave to Americans of this generation a greater opportunity. Not only could the work of the most distinguished silhouettist of his day be studied in a more intimate way, but family portraits could be purchased by hundreds of people. It was interesting and highly diverting, this locating of grandfathers and grandmothers, great-uncles and great-aunts, to say nothing of the pleasure of seeing presidents, diplomats, artists, musicians, the great and the near-great.

Of distinguished artists whose work will some-

times reward the quest of the collector may be mentioned Field, Pearce and Foster. Unlike Edouart, they made no American tours, although Americans in London probably sought their services.

It is known that Abigail Adams visited the studio of Patience Wright in 1785 and described her as "a gifted artist but a shockingly untidy woman." Mrs. Wright had a tremendous vogue in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and anything from her hand may be well considered a prize. She worked with a sharp pair of scissors, chatting continually, sometimes making a family group, sometimes an intricate fruit and flower piece. Wax profiles were also modeled by her and colored by an

ingenious method of her own. She lived when the silhouette was the rage of the hour, when albums were filled with portraits in black and white, even as the plush album of hideous memory was later filled with photographs; when clever amateurs were "cutting each other" with more or less skill, and when the gentle craft was taught in fashionable schools for young ladies, together with music, manners, needlework and French.

Rosenberg belongs to this picturesque day, and several English collections, notably the Wellesley, are rich in examples of his work. He was a painter of profiles rather than an expert with the scissors. On the convex side of a clear glass, a head was sketched in black paint and later protected by a thin sheet of wax or plaster. The wonder is that so many of these fragile things have lasted until this day,

perfect in every detail and with the word "Bath" still faintly visible.

The collector of silhouettes soon learns to make many distinctions and to tell at long range whether black paper or India ink has been used. He recognizes the work of Hubbard of the early Victorian period by his lavish use of gold, that of Pearce by his vellum backgrounds, and that of Rosenberg and his followers by their glass mounts and painted profiles, that of Patience Wright by her own peculiar methods, and so on and on.

Hubbard and Pearce usually signed their portraits, as did Miers, Jordan and Foster. American silhouettes are often unsigned and undated. Here a knowledge of costumes is a great aid in placing the period. Oval backgrounds and oval frames sometimes indicate old specimens. Another early style



of frame is seen in the square panel of wood or pasteboard inclosing an oval or a circle upon which the portrait is shown. Full-length figures, except in groups, usually belong to the nineteenth century. The silhouettes of the eighteenth century suggest the miniature; feet were often ignored, and hands seldom appeared. For real beauty, the profiles of the eighteenth century stand supreme; for quaintness, those of the early nineteenth century lead.

Edouart has his own particular place, perhaps the finest draftsman of all the men who attempted the "shadowgraph." He scorned the use of gold in order to add interest. Black was black, and white was white, and he knew how to draw hands and feet with consummate skill. But with the Edouarts, some of the earlier and more imaginative portraits should be included. One charming style depicts the face of the sitter solidly black and the accessories in a neutral wash of paint. Wigs, laces, caps and hats are wonderfully effective thus treated.

Another, and rare type, shows a white or ivory-colored margin from which the portrait has been cut away. Mounted on black, the effect is that of the ordinary silhouette, until a close examination reveals the fact that the usual process has been reversed. Examples of this character are very scarce, sometimes dating back as far as 1720. They may truly be called "shadowgraphs," as the term "silhouette" did not exist until Etienne de Silhouette became Minister of France under Louis XV in 1759. While the finding of a real shadowgraph is not an every-day probability, it would be a bold prophet who would predict that one could not be secured.

Of women silhouettists, Patience Wright is best

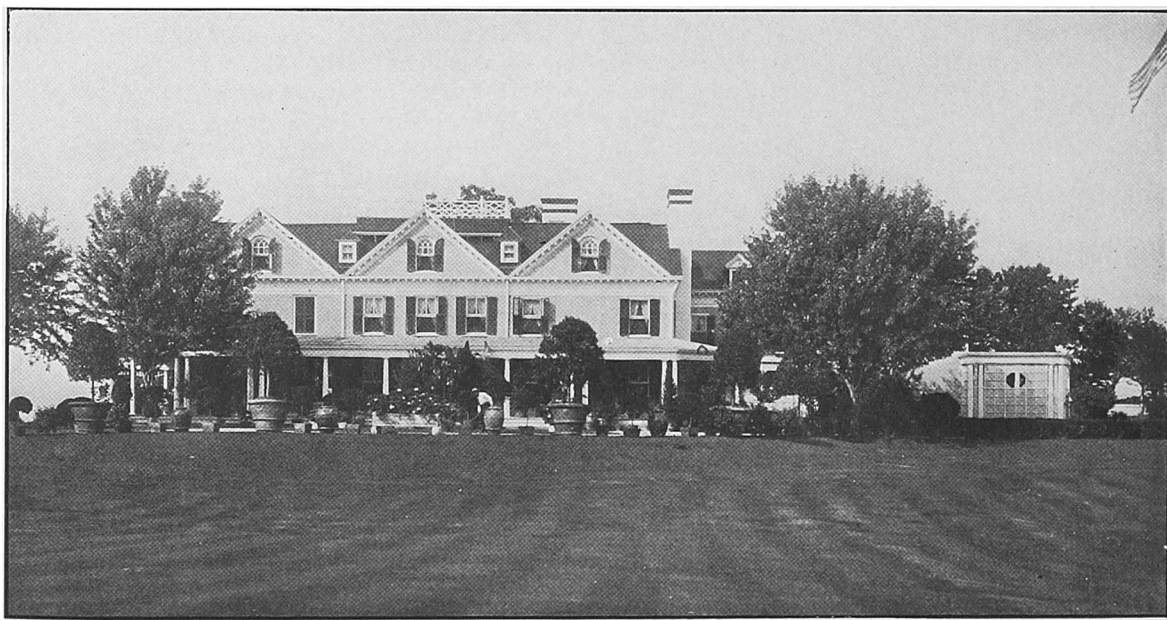
known, but Mrs. Lightfoot of Liverpool and Mrs. Beetham of Buxton produced a number of very interesting portraits. Mrs. Lightfoot was a contemporary of Mrs. Wright; Mrs. Beetham's day was a little later.

Several Americans achieved marked distinction with the scissors. Charles Wilson Peale, the painter, should be mentioned first, although the work of Samuel Powell, also of Philadelphia, ranks very near it. Salem, as might be expected, produced several clever exponents of the black art, among the number, Bache and Joyce. The former invented a machine for cutting known as "Bache's patent." Other signatures unearthed at long intervals are Polk, King, Doyle, Williams, Bowen and the two Doolittles.

Patience Wright should have special interest for us. She was born in this country in 1725, and married Joseph Wright, a Quaker, in 1772. Her success with silhouettes here led her to seek a wider field in London, where greater gains could be secured. It was a case of seeking English shillings, not American dollars. The portraits she made before she went abroad are now extremely valuable.

In the quest for silhouettes, the unknown and unidentified will predominate. Few will belong to that century of romance and powdered hair, the eighteenth. Anything earlier than 1820 may be considered "old," while many of the most interesting specimens will range through the picturesque thirties and the forgotten forties.

No old room is quite complete without its silhouette, nor modern room furnished in an old-fashioned manner.



EAST FRONT

## THE STANFORD WHITE HOUSE AT ST. JAMES, L. I.

BY LIONEL MOSES

**I**N the realm of art the name of Stanford White stands among those of highest accomplishment so the house he built for himself has a peculiarly interesting position among his works. One might expect to see an edifice erected along the

lines of formality and "correct" to the last detail—an exemplification of the classical knowledge which his firm, McKim, Mead & White, were the greatest, if not the best, exponents. But Stanford White was a romanticist in art with a profound